

APPENDIX B
AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

An Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is an area within the public lands where special management attention is required to protect and prevent irreparable damage to important historic, cultural or scenic values, fish and wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes, or to protect life and safety from natural hazards. ACEC management objectives are formulated to protect an area's important resources and values without unnecessarily or unreasonably restricting uses that are compatible with that protection. All designated ACECs receive first priority for planning and management over other areas in the Resource Area.

Three sites in the Pocatello Resource Area have been identified and nominated for ACEC designation. They include the 2,483-acre Stump Creek Ridge, 1,800-acre Downey Watershed, near the town of Downey and 223-acre Travertine Park area.

Stump Creek Ridge ACEC

Stump Creek Ridge is one of the most important elk winter ranges in the PRA. Up to 300 elk winter along this ridge from Hyde Canyon on the Forest south to the public land in the Stump Creek. In addition, about 100 deer also use the area. During the last two years, the Idaho Fish and Game Department has fed elk from this wintering herd at a feed station in Wyoming. The Stump Creek Habitat Management Plan covers this area.

This area is part of a ridge system which extends from Stump Peak 13 miles to the northwest to the Stump Creek Narrows at the Wyoming border. Elevations on these nominated parcels range from 6100 feet to 7400 feet.

At all elevations, the most common vegetation community is big sage with an understory of bluebunch wheatgrass or other grasses and forbs; it is most often found on the southerly and westerly slopes. There are large areas on the western slopes which are favored by elk, and are more a mountain brush-type. These areas have a higher proportion of serviceberry, bitterbrush, and snowberry than the sage/grass community. They are found primarily from 6700 to 7200 feet. Slopes facing to the north and east, which have a greater snow accumulation, support communities of aspen and/or Douglas-fir with an understory which is predominately pinegrass or chokecherry and some willow.

The major wildlife species in the area are: elk (winter); sage grouse, moose, deer, coyotes, badgers, jackrabbits (year around); and blue grouse, redtail hawks, prairie falcons, ground squirrels, and marmots (summer).

There is one road which traverses the area, that is used for access by ranchers, hunters and maintenance personnel for the television repeater in Section 15.

A snowmobile closure to protect wintering game has been in effect in this area since 1971.

ACEC management objectives to protect the important wildlife values are as follows:

1. Establish grazing systems which enhance winter forage for elk.
2. Propose a common use allotment by combining some or all of the grazing allotments.
3. Continue snowmobile closure, increase enforcement efforts.
4. Rehabilitate winter range through burning or establishment of browse species.

Travertine Park ACEC

Travertine Park ACEC has three unique features:

1. Several rare plants have been collected in the area. One of the plants, a lichen species previously unreported in North America, was discovered in the cracks within the Travertine rock pinnacles near the Blackfoot River.
2. Two unusual springs along the south bank of the river, developing travertine outwash deposits. These springs and their travertine outwash deposits are a unique aquatic-geologic feature in Idaho.
3. A small area of relatively undisturbed mixed-shrub vegetation, protected by the river on the north and by cliffs at either end, was discovered.

These features of the Travertine Park area add up to an unusual situation that should receive special consideration.

The ACEC management opportunities for this area are:

1. Fence to exclude livestock from the area.
2. Sign the area to explain values and the need to protect them.

Downey Watershed ACEC

The 1,855 acre Downey watershed was withdrawn from all forms of mineral entry, including location of non-metalliferous minerals and land appropriation, by Executive Order on December 29, 1919. The purpose of this withdrawal was to preserve all water on these lands for the community needs of the city of Downey, Idaho.

Two of the 14 springs located on public land have been developed to supply domestic water to Downey. These springs supply 90 percent of the water needs to Downey residents. The two developed springs have the water supply completely contained in a diversion box and pipeline. Below the contained springs, the native vegetation is in poor condition due to continued heavy livestock grazing. The 1981 withdrawal review by the BLM identified the need to retain the entire 1,855 acres under a withdrawal designation to protect the watershed as well as the water sources. The retention recommendation is pending approval in the Washington Office.

The ACEC management objectives for this area are:

1. Maintain the 1,855 acre withdrawal.
2. Initiate a grazing management system that will restore native vegetation to good condition.
3. Propose combining the Yago Creek and 9 Mile Creek allotments into a common allotment to provide better opportunities for grazing management.